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News

ST MARY'S HOSPITAL BANS FREE FORMULA MILK TO MAKE MUMS BREASTFEED INSTEAD

Exclusive by Alice McKeegan

September 24, 2011



Mums of newborn babies will no longer get free formula milk while in hospital – to encourage them to breastfeed.

Saint Mary's Hospital, which has the biggest maternity ward in Greater Manchester, will introduce the policy on November 1, the M.E.N. can reveal.

New mums will be told they must bring in their own cartons of milk if they choose not to breastfeed.

And they won't be allowed to bring in powdered formula milk – because they say it is banned on the wards for 'health and safety reasons'.

Hospital chiefs denied it was a cost-cutting exercise. They claimed they were still in favour of allowing mothers 'informed choice' about how to feed their children.

And they stressed mums who were medically unable to breastfeed, or had babies too sick to be breastfed, would still receive free milk. Leaflets explaining the new rules are being given out to pregnant women in clinics ahead of their introduction.

It says: "Breastmilk is the healthiest milk to feed your baby

"Breastfeeding also benefits mothers by reducing their risk of breast cancer, ovarian cancer and osteoporosis."

The leaflet adds that staff will be on hand to support any women who decide to formula feed their babies to provide sterile bottles and teats. New mums will also be able to store their cartons in a locked fridge.

Similar policies have already been introduced in Bolton, Tameside and Salford.

A spokesman for Saint Mary's said: "We can confirm that in line with several other hospitals in Greater Manchester we will no longer be routinely providing formula milk from November 1.

"We are still providing formula for babies and mothers whose medical needs mean that breastfeeding is not appropriate.

"We are continuing to provide bottles and teats, and we give daily demonstrations about the safe preparation and use of formula to support new mums."

Wythenshawe and Pennine Acute, which runs hospitals in Bury, Oldham, Rochdale and North Manchester, said they had no plans to scrap free milk.

Helen Thompson, the head of midwifery at Wythenshawe, said: "Like all other hospitals, we support the initiation of breastfeeding with all new babies.

"However, we recognise that some mums, prefer to bottle feed their babies, and we believe that is their maternal choice."

What do you think? Send us your comments below ...

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Kris-Kross, Manchester (24/09/2011 at 09:25)

This is a very healthy and positive move by the hospital and I welcome it. I hope other hospitals will catch on to this.

susan Tait (24/09/2011 at 18:50)

I only hope other hospitals have the common sense to carry on providing formula! its absolutely disgraceful that a newborn baby does'nt have its formula provided by the NHS while in hospital, what next? patients buying their own food!!!

Pattie O'Doors (24/09/2011 at 22:35)

I think it's appalling. Whatever happened to freedom of choice? Breast-feeding is a highly personal decision and bullying vulnerable women into is disgraceful.

lovinthebanter, Manchester (26/09/2011 at 10:34)

"what next? patients buying their own food!!!"

good idea, that would also save on money and may improve on whats offered

Karen McDonald (24/09/2011 at 09:26)

St Mary's cost cutting exercise (because that's what it is) will do nobody any favours. Those who cannot breastfeed for medical reasons must have bottle milk for their child. It's petty and purile to ban bottle milk.

19 Titles (24/09/2011 at 10:24)

If you read the actual article you will notice they have not banned it, you simply have to bring your own and pay for it. Why should the NHS pay because some mothers cant be bothered to do what should come naturally.

the peoples man, crompton (24/09/2011 at 11:31)

19 Titles, you clearly have no idea what you're talking about. Some mothers cannot breastfeed for various reasons. Get back to commenting on City articles.

Unreasonably Censored, Chorlton (24/09/2011 at 13:42)

All three of you need to read the article again!

"We are still providing formula for babies and mothers whose medical needs mean that breastfeeding is not appropriate."

Miah, Rochdale (24/09/2011 at 10:03)

I hope the staff are prepared for longer hospital stays for mother and baby as it can take a more time and more help/advice from midwives to support mums to breast feed

vns82, manchester (24/09/2011 at 11:04)

Yes very true, i could not breast feed and got a very bad infection in my ducts that spread, i was hospitalised with for 2 weeks, which really after giving birth i would of been home the next day!

scram, manchester (24/09/2011 at 10:17)

Simple...you still have exactly the same choices and responsibilities, no one is forcing anyone into doing something they don't want/can't do. What this means is that you have to take responsibility for YOUR child from birth! I've never understood why baby milk was provided free.

Dingbat_2011, Manchester (24/09/2011 at 14:30)

If the mother has to stay in hospital do her family have to bring her food, or is she fed by the hospital for free??????????????

Wat Tylers Sister, Olde England (24/09/2011 at 10:49)

here we go again. Just like the MMR vaccine, there will be no alternative. And this, before the nasty party has even privatised the NHS.

Black Flag (24/09/2011 at 12:37)

If the NHS was privatised (by which I mean genuine privatisation, not the tinkering that the government is doing), then I would expect this to be less likely to happen.

Just like education, healthcare doesn't belong in the hands of the state.

big g (24/09/2011 at 13:59)

of course there is an alternative - buy your own!

Nettle, UK (24/09/2011 at 15:41)

So Black Flag, you believe that only the wealthy should be educated and have health care? Sounds a bit Victorian to me.

vns82, manchester (24/09/2011 at 10:58)

Yes and then when mothers breast feed in public and then get told not to and get punished for it then what do they do then???

big g (24/09/2011 at 13:59)

punished? ive never heard of mothers being punished for breast feeding in public. there really is no need for mothers to be breast feeding in public anyway. all they have to do is use a breast pump and fill a bottle up before they leave home. of course there may be occasions when they run out of milk but im sure they can find a discreet spot somewhere. the problem with some mothers is they want to breast feed in the least discreet place possible and not all members of the public want to see it.

Unreasonably Censored, Chorlton (24/09/2011 at 16:24)

Trust me big g, just because a bottle might be full of breast milk, doesn't mean the baby will take it!

You can get big 'baby aprons' these days. Very discrete.

big g (24/09/2011 at 19:39)

@censored, there you go, if mothers want to breastfeed in public they should just get one of these aprons and everyone is happy

levi oakley (24/09/2011 at 11:02)

Breast feeding is very healthy dont get me wrong but its not for every1 as some pepole struggle and find it hard i am currently 17 wks pregnant and i hope to try and breastfeed for aslong as i can and in the long run it is healthier for you and your baby..x

vanessa carr (24/09/2011 at 11:18)

Well i had 2 children hoping that my breast milk was the healthiest,i did nothing but breast feed for 12 months, 7 years on, my eldest suffers from Eczema,constant ear infections,constant tummy aches, constipation despite a healthy diet then 7 months ago, my youngest developed asthma,eczema,chest infections every winter...i told myself and friends that my children will be healthy as breast feeding prevents all this..how wrong was i?????

big g (24/09/2011 at 13:53)

breast milk is healthier than the alternatives but it isnt some sort of miracle nourishment that will protect children from every health problem. if it was the case that breast milk protected children from everything in times gone by, when different options were unavailable, children would not have suffered from anything.

SJR_101, Manchester (24/09/2011 at 14:04)

Has it been proven that you breastfeeding them caused these problems? I'd imagine it had nothing to do with it. A poor diet since then is more likely (although that too is a complete guess).

Mrs A (25/09/2011 at 20:01)

They could have suffered these things to a much greater degree if you hadn't breastfed, did you consider that?

Joe G, Manchester (24/09/2011 at 12:20)

What will be next, charging the mothers for food during their stay as well. It is just a cost cutting exercise.and nothing else.

big g (24/09/2011 at 14:06)

so what if it is a cost cutting exercise? the reality is there are going to be cuts because there isnt enough money to go around. when there are people being denied life-saving drugs how can anyone consider free formula milk a priority?

geriatric, Whalley range (24/09/2011 at 12:56)

It's impossible to get liquid formula that is suitable for vegetarians. Only the powdered variants are veggie friendly. So what do those vegetarians who can't or don't wish to breastfeed to do?

big g (24/09/2011 at 13:46)

buy their own

Pattie O'Doors (24/09/2011 at 22:47)

I don't know of any newborn babies that have the ability to choose if they are vegetarian or not.

lovinthebanter, Manchester (26/09/2011 at 11:24)

How can a new born be a vegetarian

petitevamp, bolton (24/09/2011 at 15:02)

More and more like America every day I think. They say it is not cost cutting, pull the other one it jingles.

Michelle Routh (24/09/2011 at 16:56)

As an American, I disagree with this statement.

In the United States, we don't enforce the WHO code. This means that formula companies are free to

spread misinformation about breastfeeding to the masses. They have the financial means to do so widely and in very effective ways, while our public healthcare system is very underfunded and has little voice in comparison. Formula companies virtually fund entire magazines (American Baby and Parents to name a few) in which seemingly pro-breastfeeding articles spread horrible lies about breast and formula feeding to unsuspecting mothers to be. They send in representatives to obstetrician and pediatrician offices and to hospital maternity units. These reps buddy up with healthcare providers, provide seemingly unlimited free meals and perks, and of course, unlimited free formula samples. These are highly unethical practices that influence healthcare provider recommendations greatly. You are right, in America, we put the dollar over what is right much of the time, but the way in which it's happening here is much worse.

J Owen (24/09/2011 at 16:13)

Fantastic forward thinking views. Formula will never be an equal substitute for breast milk. Too many mothers are just plain lazy and choose to bottle feed so they can continue to drink, do drugs or other personal things that stop them taking full care of their baby.

Rightly, formula will still be provided for those that can't breastfeed but they are few and far between.

It might then make those who can least afford formula actually consider the cost as unfortunately they are the ones most likely to choose to bottle feed. For example the stupid young girl on that BBC1 breastfeeding programme who said she wouldn't breast feed as 'boobs are for sex'.

big g - if you are exclusively breast feeding your baby they often won't take a bottle as it feels different to the nipple so bottle feeding in public may not be an option. Why should anyone feel ashamed to breastfeed in public? It's what our bodies were designed to do.

big g (24/09/2011 at 17:00)

the problem is easily solved dont exclusively feed from the breast. allow the baby to become accustomed to a bottle as well. sex is a natural act as well but that doesnt mean its appropriate in public.

Carla M (25/09/2011 at 09:46)

And why should women feel ashamed if they choose not to breastfeed?

Nina Killen (25/09/2011 at 13:28)

big g, eating is a natural act - we all do it in public all the time. Breastfeeding is just the baby eating, It is not comparable to sex in the slightest.

Michelle Routh (24/09/2011 at 16:19)

This is a very good measure and all hospitals should be doing this.

I'm concerned about two points, however.

1. If a family is planning on using powdered formula at home, it would be prudent to assist them in preparation while in the hospital to ensure they know how to do so safely.

2. Very sick babies need breastmilk, not formula. If they are able to take in formula, they are much better off taking in expressed colostrum and/or breastmilk.

susan Tait (24/09/2011 at 18:50)

Formula does come with instructions

Sarah Bowyer (29/09/2011 at 16:21)

Michelle, a lot of hospitals use donor breast milk for very sick babies, to give them the best possible chance. Donating breast milk is just like donating blood (although slower and not as painful!).

gillykins, urmston (24/09/2011 at 17:47)

Quite right. Of course some mums cannot breastfeed, but it costs nothing to any new mum to give it a go, AND its the best start in life for our little ones.

susan Tait (24/09/2011 at 18:40)

And why should a new mum give it a go if they choose they don't want to, and who said its the best start in life, obviously you are an expert??

susan Tait (24/09/2011 at 18:43)

No you are right, it does'nt cost anything for new mums to give it a go, but where is freedom of choice in this matter, new mums are put under enough pressure without having to GIVE IT A GO if they don't want to!

big g (24/09/2011 at 19:34)

@susan tait, mothers still have freedom of choice, they just have to pay for the formula. whats wrong with that? i have to pay for prescriptions!

susan Tait (24/09/2011 at 18:40)

Yet again, it seems to me new mums are put under too much pressure by big brother! telling them what is best, its upto mum whats best for their own child and for the mother!

big g (24/09/2011 at 19:32)

'big brother' isnt telling mothers whats best, mothers still have a choice. it could be argued the other way that by offering free formula 'big brother' is encouraging mothers not to breast feed!

geriatric, Whalley range (25/09/2011 at 18:55)

Big g, that's the 4th comment you've made on this thread about those who want to use powdered formula buying their own. If you read the article properly it states that the hospital is banning powdered milk due to "health and safety reasons".

big g (26/09/2011 at 16:15)

@geriatric, yes youre right the article says that but the hospital is NOT forcing mothers to breast feed. if mothers choose not to do so they can bring in cartons of milk, so the mother still has a choice of whether to breast feed or not. normally mothers are not in hospital for more than a few days after which point they can switch from carton milk to formula should they choose to do so. why any mother would want to feed a vulnerable newborn child a synthetic product over its natural counterpart, other than if necessary due to unusual circumstances, is beyond me!

susan Tait (24/09/2011 at 18:40)

This is again someone else deciding what is right for mother and baby, big brother telling new mums what to do, new mums are put under enough pressure without feeling guilty about not wanting to breastfeed. Its disgraceful formula is'nt going to be provided for mums who have decided not to breastfeed.

Theowolfe (24/09/2011 at 18:48)

It's amazing how many people feel it is their right to pontificate to mothers what they should and should not do in their private lives and this is just another example.

In too many area of our lives the personal has become political and unfortunately organisation such as the NHS has taken on the mantle of state spies and enforcers with the willing support and cheer leading from anti freedom ideologues such as some of the posters on here.

Breast is only best if the woman involved decides it is, it is no one else's business.

Unreasonably Censored, Chorlton (24/09/2011 at 21:39)

No, breast is best - full stop.

Theowolfe (25/09/2011 at 10:17)

Unreasonably Censored, Chorlton

Why?

SJR_101, Manchester (25/09/2011 at 15:52)

Unreasonably Censored, why breast best? What if the mum smokes? Is it still best? What if she drinks? Is it still best? What if she eats rubbish processed food? Is it still best? I'm not medically trained (and i doubt you are either), but my guess would be no.

Watching as life passes by..., manchester (24/09/2011 at 19:16)

I breastfed both my children. It was great for me. However when the youngest was born she fed for hours continuously and couldnt be satisfied. By the early hours a midwife asked me to feed her in a different room so as not to disturb other

and couldn't be satisfied. By the early hours a midwife asked me to feed her in a different room so as not to disturb other mums. An hour later she suggested a bottle. After demolishing a 4oz bottle my daughter finally slept! The next day just before discharge we were in the same position and instead of spending hours trying I fed her and when she was still hungry she polished off another 3oz. I continued to breastfeed her when we got home and everything was fine.

Where would we have been though if I hadn't have been offered that bottle? I would have continued to try and feed a very hungry baby and had no sleep.

Sometimes it isn't predictable whether you can or can't feed a baby.

Harry Stafford, Imperial Hotel, Manchester (25/09/2011 at 15:05)

If you hadn't been offered that bottle (although reading the article there is a strong possibility that even with this new possibility you still would have been), I'm sure the nurse would have suggested that your partner, another relative or somebody got you some formula from a shop for you to use.

Nina Killen (24/09/2011 at 19:55)

This must be because St Mary's is trying to become Baby Friendly - why no mention of that in the article? To become a Baby Friendly hospital, you are not allowed to give away formula because it undermines breastfeeding.

Pattie O'Doors (24/09/2011 at 22:50)

I should hope it's 'Baby Friendly' it's a maternity hospital!!!!

ninny, stockport (25/09/2011 at 01:18)

why is formula needed. breast feeding is so right for your baby. women in third world countries can't go to the local shop and buy formula. It should be a natural process.

bignutz, ashton (25/09/2011 at 06:15)

Great idea....a load of over-weight women sat around talking rubbish with their breasts exposed....just what manchester needs more of.

it will be just like walking around Staly-Venice on a saturday night.

No thanks

Harry Stafford, Imperial Hotel, Manchester (25/09/2011 at 15:01)

Nobody is forcing you to walk around a maternity ward though are they?

lady sd , bury (26/09/2011 at 08:49)

a load of over-weight women sat around talking rubbish with their breasts exposed..... excuse me but when breastfeeding most mothers have the respect to be covered up it is also one of the most natural things in the worldoverweight!!!! it wouldn't be normal if a woman didn't put on a few pounds in pregnancy

DrPepper (26/09/2011 at 15:21)

think you will find it's called Staly-Vegas not Venice. And that's a lovely thing to say about a woman who has just had a baby and will already be feeling sensitive about her weight! Proves what an idiot you are.

Another simple minded moron like the rest, Rochdale (25/09/2011 at 10:25)

If they were serious about health issues they'd ban the mothers to be from smoking outside the doors, ban all crisps and chocolate from the shop and insist on only healthy meals, but all these things would cost money, whereas this saves money. This isn't a health issue as formula milk is as good as breast milk. Anyone else see the real issue here???

Nina Killen (25/09/2011 at 13:49)

"Formula milk is as good as breastmilk" - according to which study? There has never been a study that has shown that formula is as good as breastmilk. Actually the studies show that formula fed babies have many more health problems and cost the NHS millions of pounds a year. The real issue here is that where formula is given away for free more women will use formula and fewer women will breastfeed. That is a fact and that is why UNICEF launched the Baby Friendly Initiative, which stipulates that formula milk should not be given away for free unless medically indicated.

Another simple minded moron like the rest, Rochdale (25/09/2011 at 20:24)

Actually the studies show no such thing. There is no evidence one way or the other just badly informed propaganda from both sides. The one fact that is beyond question is babies do better if the mother is

happy and not stressed. So give them a choice and stop imposing a one sided view

S Horner (27/09/2011 at 17:35)

Breastmilk provides the newborn with passive immunity in the form of antibodies to protect it from illness whilst it's immune system is still developing. Formula doesn't. Ask any midwife, women ALWAYS have the right to choose, but we encourage breastfeeding because the bottom line is that breastfeeding, if possible, provides the best start for a child.

Marple Girl, Marple (25/09/2011 at 10:39)

This disgusts me. Im sick to death of hospitals pressuring new mums into breastfeeding, even the leaflets are stating the benefits over formula - its the mothers choice, stop all this pressure - its wrong. I accept people have their opinions on this but does this now mean poorer families will have no choice but to breastfeed because the hospitals wont provide the formula?

I have a few friends who didnt want to breastfeed and were pretty much left to their own devices whilst feeding in the hospitals despite wanting help and felt looked down on. Im glad South Manchester hospitals arent following this lead. Also, i accept that if you want to feed formula then you should provide it as life is not about freebies, however, the poor will need help - not herded into breastfeeding because they cant afford otherwise.

big g (25/09/2011 at 13:39)

stop being so melodramatic, the hospital provides free formula whilst the mother and child are in hospital which is a relatively short period of time, normally a few days at the most. the cost incurred is not going to bankrupt anyone!

Nina Killen (25/09/2011 at 13:44)

Your argument makes no sense - formula feeding costs around £500 a year. Having to take formula to hospital will cost an extra £5-10, if that. Breastfeeding will cost them £0. So how is it wrong to help poorer women breastfeed?

Formula feeding costs the NHS millions of pounds every year because formula fed babies get more respiratory problems, gastroenteritis, ear infections - they are much more likely to be hospitalised than breastfed babies. So how is it wrong to try to encourage women to breastfeed?

citycentre, manchester (25/09/2011 at 14:56)

If new mothers find the financial challenge of buying baby milk excessive how are they going to cope with the numerous additional costs awaiting them over the next 18 years or so?

Doobydoo, Worsley (25/09/2011 at 10:57)

Nobody is telling mums how to their babies. Mums will still have the choice but if they choose to feed formula then they will have to buy it.

My concern however is that a new mum who plans to breastfeed may find that for some reason she cannot and therefore will not have taken any formula into hospital. I know this happens from experience of when I had my eldest child. Fortunately for me the hospital still provided free milk.

Theowolfe (25/09/2011 at 12:33)

Wrong Doobydoo,

The story clearly states the position of the hospital.

"And they won't be allowed to bring in powdered formula milk – because they say it is banned on the wards for 'health and safety reasons.'"

No formula allowed!!!! This is ideological dictat.

Nina Killen (25/09/2011 at 13:36)

And as the article says, in these instances the hospital will still provide free formula.

mb_manchester, Manchester (27/09/2011 at 10:45)

Powdered milk won't be allowed but carton infant milk will be, so formula will be allowed

Nina Killen (25/09/2011 at 13:35)

This is not about 'pressuring' women to breastfeed. It is about helping women to breastfeed. It is a fact that where

formula milk is freely available, more women will use it. So the question is: do we want more women to breastfeed? The answer has to be yes. Over the population as a whole, babies who are formula fed babies have more allergies, respiratory problems, behaviour problems, lower IQ, more ear infections and are more likely to be hospitalised in the first year of life. Around the world, 3,000 babies die every day because they are not breastfed. Every mother has a choice of how to feed their baby, and it should be a free choice but when formula companies spend billions on advertising versus the pitiful amount spent by the govt on promoting breastfeeding, how 'free' is that choice? UNICEF set up the Baby Friendly Initiative to get more women breastfeeding, and part of BFI is not allowing formula to be freely available in hospitals. Because it has been proven that free formula milk means more formula fed babies.

Loobylou2011 (25/09/2011 at 19:17)

I was a breastfed baby for 9 months followed by a healthy homecooked diet but I was also a poorly child with numerous ear infections, chest infections, asthma, convulsions... Just because a child is bottle fed it doesn't cause a child to be, just as breastfeeding won't stop a child becoming ill. Other factors will also play a part!! I'm not denying breastfeeding isn't great if you can do it but I dislike the fact those who bottle feed are made to feel so guilty.

Embembooshkin , High in the tree. (25/09/2011 at 16:22)

I thought that the milk making companies provided the milk for free to the hospitals. if they don't they should as it's a great marketing ploy. Most mums will stick with the first milk that their baby tries.

Nina Killen (25/09/2011 at 18:25)

Yes the formula companies do give it away free - and that's what needs to be stopped. This is not about cost-cutting, it is about making a decision not to give free formula to mothers, because when mothers receive free formula they tend to formula-feed their babies. And what the NHS should be promoting is breastfeeding not formula feeding - because formula makes babies ill with ear infections, respiratory problems, gastroenteritis and allergies.

Embembooshkin , High in the tree. (25/09/2011 at 21:16)

Hmmm i've got babies that were breast fed and a couple that had C&G Neither of the formula babies had any problems! I wasn't breastfed and i'm (touch wood) a very healthy 35 year old. I can understand where you're coming from but formula does not "make babies ill" Breast would help fight infection better i can see that but to claim that formula makes babies ill is a bit silly!

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